

NBC BRIEFING

29 May 1958

LEBANON

- E. Security Situation:** Appears basically unfavorable to government, which seems unable cope with stream of infiltrators and growing bands of native rebels armed by UAR. Rebels control parts of several cities and much of the countryside.
- A. Beirut:**
1. Bombings now of terroristic nature to frighten population.
 2. *Fighting broke out*
~~Biggest battle~~ in Beirut thus far broke out last night with government irregulars fighting rebels. *Monday 11/4/58*
- B. Tripoli:** New fighting broke out Tuesday.
- C. Balbak:** The town has changed hands several times. 3,000 rebels, including Syrians and some Egyptians, moving on Nabi Uthman.
- D. Southern Lebanon:** Army occupied Sidon then withdrew leaving defense to pro-government irregulars.
1. Syrian irregulars (30 bus loads) and arms/ammunition sent over border on Monday.
 2. Bayt ad-Din area inactive as result of truce between security forces and Druze opposition. Druze forces reinforced from Syria and now supplied with howitzers.
Offensive vs. Beirut feared.
- E. Northern Lebanon:** Here army holds only Tripoli, rebels control rest.
1. Border with Syria wide open and Syrian police operating two mobile transmitters in Lebanon.

F. 18 US tanks arrived by sea.

II. Political Situation:

- A. On Tuesday Sami Sulh made statement to effect that cabinet was not formed to change constitution and will not request it. Extremist opposition unsatisfied and continue to demand Chamoun's resignation.
- B. Gen Shihab's equivocal attitude continues. He has told cabinet that security in cities is job for local authorities, not army. In countryside, army generally has followed passive role and left fighting to gendarmerie and pro-govt partisans.
1. Shihab has stated his policy not "to engage opposition forces directly." Rebels number 6-7,000 according to Shihab.
 2. He has stated "Nasirism wave of future and Lebanon will have to accommodate itself gracefully."
 3. On the other hand he has also stated that intervention by western troops inevitable in end.
 4. Apparently Shihab quite capable of accepting accommodation with Nasir or retiring to his villa in Nice.

Prospects:

III. In summary, picture is extremely bleak. Aside from increasing rebel activity our intelligence strongly suggests that there is a steady erosion of governmental authority and that, in addition to Shihab, ^{some} of key figures in govt are engaged in equivocal maneuvering. (Chamoun will shortly find himself with very limited support:)

IV. Effect of US Intervention in Lebanon: US intervention would enable Chamoun to survive but would bring serious problems.

- A. Introduction of US troops might intensify Christian-Muslim tension and further demoralize an already unreliable army.
- B. Serious incidents and real clashes likely between elements in populace and US troops.
- C. Difficult to restore order. US might face choice of ^{a prolonged} staying indefinitely or withdrawing before situation stabilized.
- D. If countryside and Syrian border to be controlled as well as cities much larger forces than ⁵⁰⁰⁰ now contemplated would be necessary.

V. UAR Reaction to US intervention: UAR reaction to US intervention would probably be:

- A. Immediate step up in violent propaganda campaign against US, Jordan, Iraq. Also efforts in UN.
- B. Increased assistance to opposition in Lebanon probably including support for terrorist acts against US troops and civilians.
- C. Probably sabotage action against Western oil interests in Lebanon and elsewhere.

VI. Reaction elsewhere in Near East to US intervention:

- A. Jordan and Iraq, now supporting Chamoun with arms and apparently a few men, would welcome US intervention. They are fully aware of threat Lebanese situation poses for them.
- B. Turkey and Iran, also supporting Chamoun with arms, would of course welcome US action.
- C. Weak Arab governments, such as Libya and Sudan, which are vulnerable to Nasir's moves, would also welcome any US support to Lebanon.

D. However, strong adverse popular reaction in all Arab countries would limit government's freedom of action. Thus, effective Iraqi and Jordanian cooperation in intervention could not be assumed.

E. Israel would view favorably any US action against Nasir. But unlikely get involved itself as long as action confined to Lebanon.

VII. Soviet Reaction to US Intervention: Would depend on way intervention developed:

- A. If action limited to protection US personnel and to helping government suppress UAR-supported uprising...Soviet reaction probably be confined to violent propaganda and diplomatic action, including support in UN.
- B. If US forces took direct military action against UAR itself... Soviets would probably provide increased military material to UAR. Maybe "volunteers" also.
- C. Unlikely, however, USSR would take any action it believed would involve serious risk of general war.

Outlook if US does not Intervene:

VIII. If situation continues to deteriorate and US does not intervene:

- A. Chamoun will probably be forced out.
- B. Any successor govt likely move toward an accommodation with Nasir.
- C. US prestige in area will suffer seriously.
- D. US friends such as ^{regimes in} Jordan and Iraq will be seriously weakened.
- E. Nasir will have gained impressive new victory.
- F. UAR likely be widely accepted among Arabs as inevitable wave of

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influence more widely, including North Africa and Sudan.

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